

Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

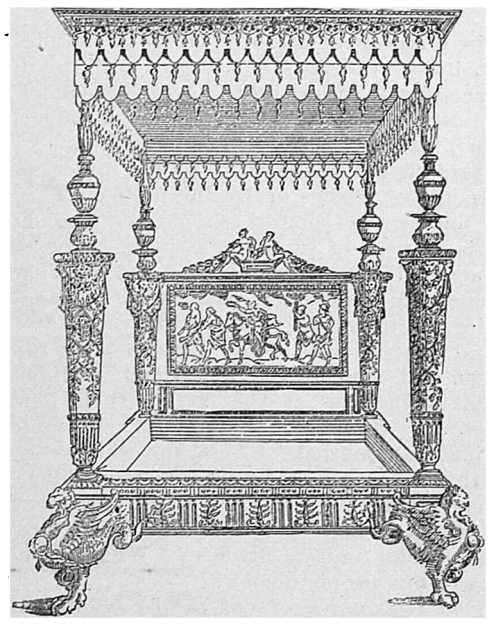
FRENCH HOUSE FURNISHING.

By Theodore Child.

THE BEDROOM.

I

In furnishing their houses the French have recourse to very great variety of styles and arrangements. At the present moment the furniture of all the antecedent epochs is more or less in

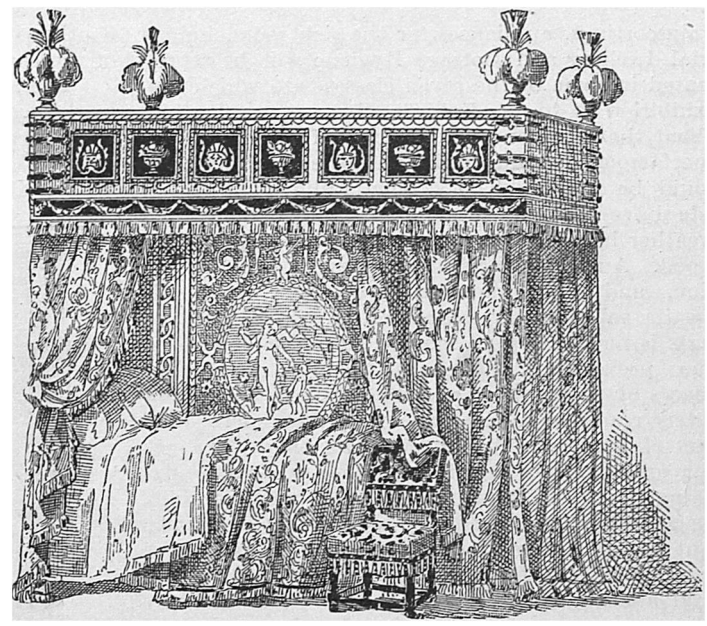


BED DESIGNED BY VRIESE, XVI. CENTURY.

vogue, even up to the furniture of the first empire with its profusion of pompous brass ornaments, and although, as we have often had occasion to observe, the style of the nineteenth century has not yet manifested itself, still our modern decorators and upholsterers have produced certain combinations that are not without individuality. But in the bedroom, above all other rooms composing a dwelling, it is allowable to indulge one's peculiar tastes. In the entrance-hall and the rooms where visitors are to be received it is reasonable to observe a certain conventionality in the disposition and nature of the furniture. In the bedroom these rules of etiquette have no application, and so both there and in the boudoir we may expect to find great variety of arrangement and provided this arrangement be in good taste we have no reason for criticising it on grounds of irregularity or originality. In the furnishing and decoration of a bedroom, it is admitted in France that taste and fancy may exercise themselves freely. Furthermore, apart from the caprices of taste and fancy, a number of other reasons intervene to regulate the choice of furniture, ornaments, drapery, colors, so as to suit the architecture, or the sex, age and social position of the occupant. Country and climate too have their importance, and a bedroom at Paris will not be furnished as a bedroom in the country might be.

The bedroom is not merely the room where one passes the night; it is above all, together with the boudoir, the domain of the woman who imparts to it some of her charm and grace. In the XVIII. century we shall see the bedroom was a reception room, and even at the present day in Parisian flats where space is furiously economized, the bedroom is often utilized on reception nights. Indeed the coquettish and tasteful arrangement of her bed-room is a matter to which a Parisian woman attaches very high importance, and, whether the amount of comfort and luxury be the minimum or the maximum, the French bedroom is markedly different in many respects from the Anglo-Saxon.

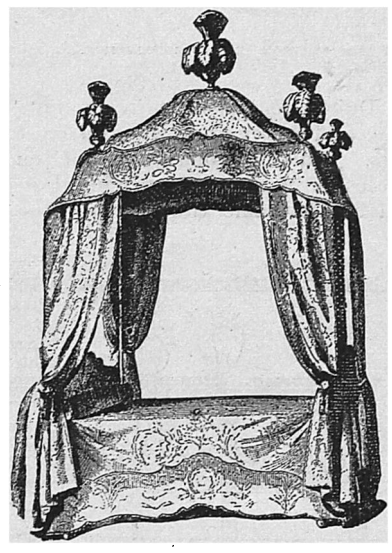
The minimum of furniture in a French bedroom consists of a bedstead, a cupboard or wardrobe with or without a looking-glass in the door, or else a chest of drawers, a night-table, two chairs and a washstand. The moment a little luxury begins to appear in an interior the washstand and all its belongings are banished into a dressing room. The bed alone remains a constant element, and the other furniture is varied in quantity and nature according as the bedroom approaches more or less a living room. Let us first say something about beds, and as almost all the forms of bed that have been invented are to be found in use somewhere or other in France, I shall ask permission to treat the subject historically, and of course with that brevity inevitable in the discussion in a few pages of what ought to form the subject of a volume.



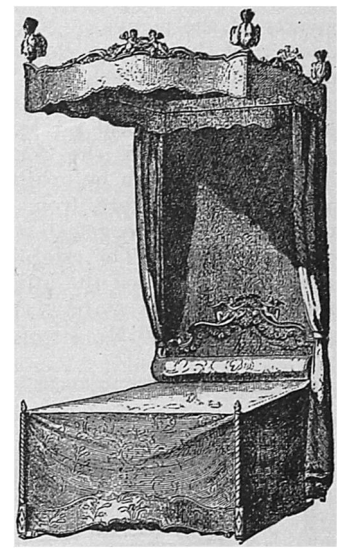
DRAPED BED, LOUIS XIII.

II.

It is curious to observe that the earliest bedsteads were almost always made of metal. Those of the Carlovingian epoch are of bronze. In the XII century oak bedsteads begin to appear, accompanied by valances or *courtines*, and surrounded by stuffs hung on a system of cords and subsequently by testers or *ciels* supported by columns. The earliest manifestation of luxury is in the richness of the embroidery of the coverings and valances, and in the XIV. century the bedstead itself was completely hidden by floating draperies of silk, velvet and gold brocade lined with fur; the mattresses were covered with satin and bolsters, pillows and two sheets were used then as they now are, only the beds were made up rather lower. This luxury of stuffs and tapestries so conspicuous in the XIV. century was of course inspired by the sight of the magnificent stuffs of the Orient which had dazzled the eyes of the Crusaders. At this time the ceremonial bed, the *lit de parade*, makes its appearance as a manifestation of wealth and luxury. Christine de Pisan, whose father, Thomas de Pisan, was astrologer royal in the reign of Charles V. and Jeanne de Bourbon, has left in her *Trésor de la cité des dames* a curious description of the bed of a rich merchant's wife arranged for her lying in, or rather for her *relevailles*. The chamber, she says, was large and handsome and all hung round with tapestry adorned with the lady's motto worked in fine gold of cyprus. The bed was hung round with a fine valance and rich hangings, and the floor around it strewn with carpets that were like gold. The sheets were without seam, *a thing newly discovered*, and the coverings of the bed splendidly embroidered with gold. In this bed the *accouchée* lay, clad in crimson silk, and propped up by pillows of the same silk with large buttons of pearl. And in the chamber was a large dresser adorned like an altar and laden with gold plate. Christine de Pisan intimates that the queen herself could not have been more sumptuously lodged. At the side of this bed of state would be placed the monumental chair which received the persons of rank or importance who came to congratulate the mother and to see the new-born babe.



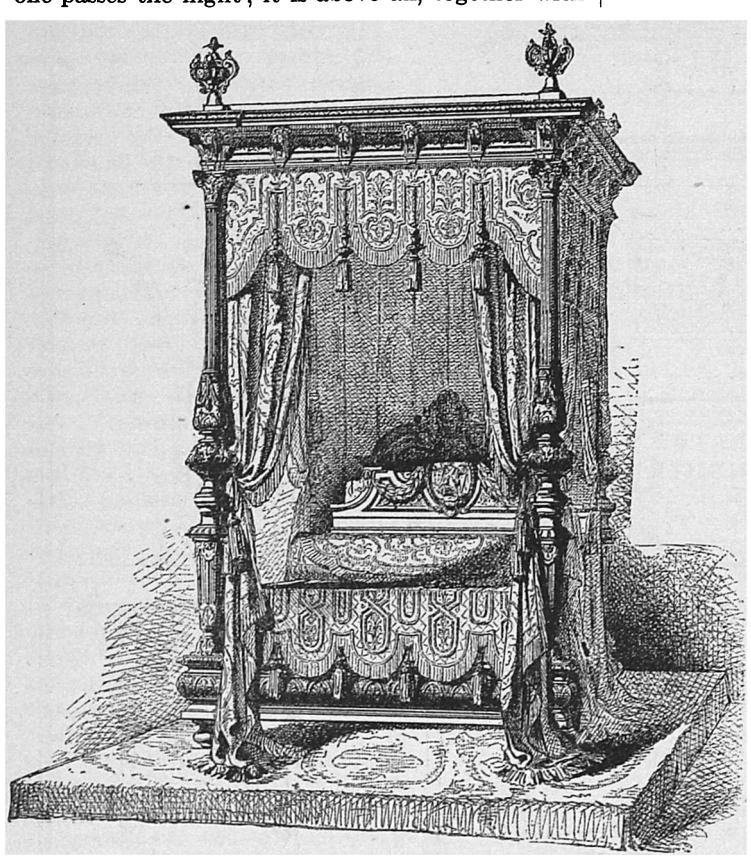
BED A LA POLONAISE, XVIII. CENTURY.



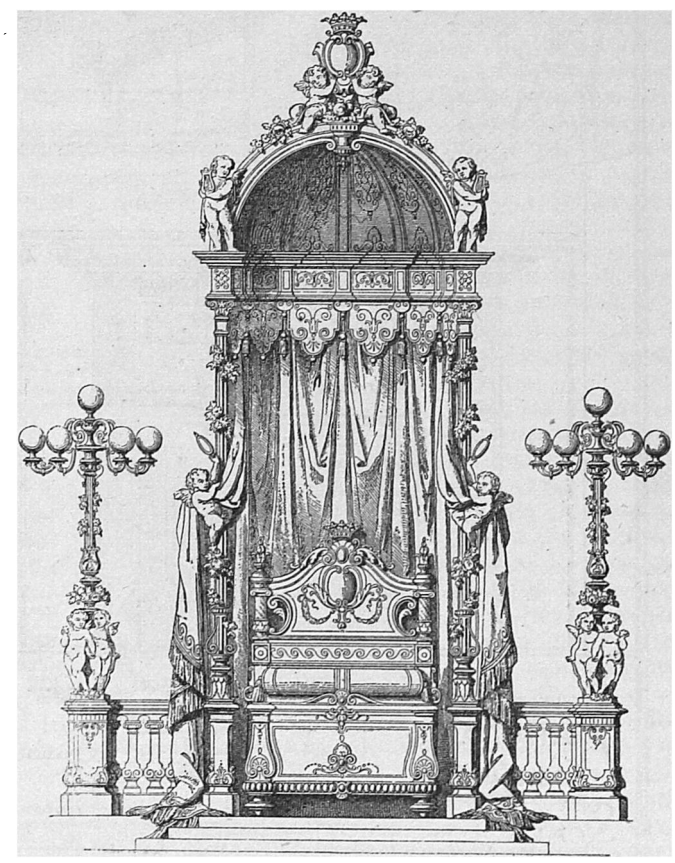
BED A LA DUCHESSE, XVIII. CENTURY.

In the XV. and XVI. centuries luxury went on increasing, and the bed became larger. Some of the beds of this epoch measure seven feet long and six feet broad. The richness of the hangings and embroideries passed all measure and all imagination; and the woods employed were not only oak but cedar, rosewood, ebony, and even ivory; the very first artists of the day like Delorme, the architect of the Tuileries, Ducerceau and Vriese, designed not only these beds but furniture of all kind.

In the XV. century the aspect of a bedroom was as follows: a four-post bed with hangings and coverings in the corner; at the side of the bed the master's chair (*chaïere*), the seat of honor, often with one or two steps; against the wall a devotional picture or a little family altar. These latter



STATE BED, [STYLE] OF [THE] RENAISSANCE.

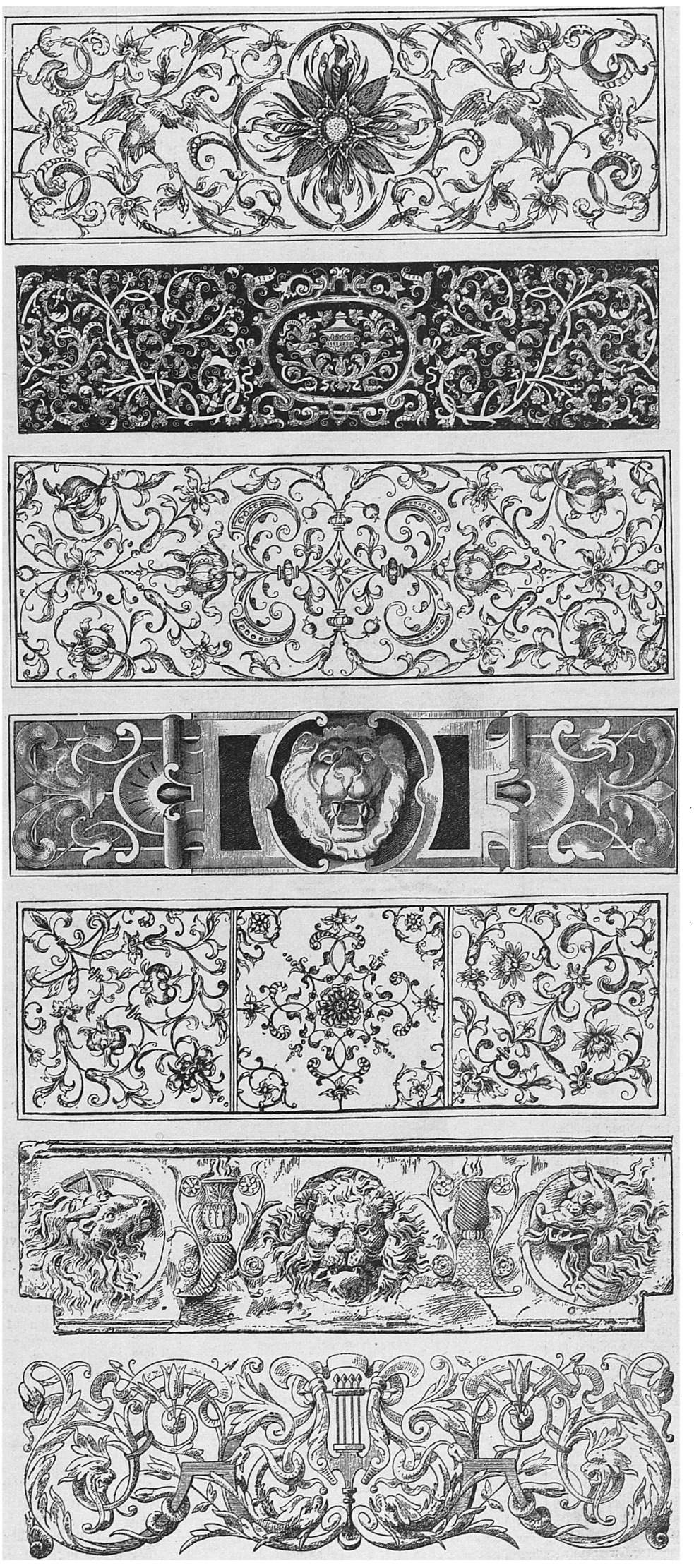


STATE BED, WITH BALUSTRADE.

details we shall find still existing in the modern bedroom. Around the room are placed the dresser and the smaller pieces of furniture, and often in front of the immense fireplace a bench with a back. This arrangement, which we find in miniatures and tapestries, proves the uniformity of manners in different classes of society; there the persons are of high degree, as is shown by their dress and luxurious surroundings; there they are simple middle-class folks surrounded by their servitors, and by a quantity of objects which show that this bedroom is also the reception room and the refectory of the family. In the XVI. century the bedchamber gradually ceases to be the principal room in the house, the reception room in fact as it had hitherto been, and assumes a more private and intricate character. The style of the XVI. century, the Renaissance, is in great favor with the modern cabinet-makers, and those who have not the fortune to possess some priceless relics of the epoch, a Renaissance bedstead, with twisted columns, Renaissance *bahuts*, credences, chairs, marriage coffers, and hangings and embroideries of the time, all authentic and genuine, content themselves with the modern reproductions which are, of course, less dear. But in any case even a fine modern Renaissance bedroom suite is only within the reach of handsome fortunes. The reader will be able to form an adequate idea of the style from the illustrations representing a Renaissance ceremonial bed or *lit de parade*, now at the castle of Fontainebleau, and a splendid Renaissance bed designed by Vriese. In the pure Renaissance bedstead the hangings are slight, but they may be as rich in material and embroidery as you please. The beauty of the bedstead consists in the elegance of the design, the delicacy and fineness of the carving or of the inlaying, which of course it would be absurd to conceal by heavy and voluminous hangings.

In the following century, the XVII., the upholsterer acquired an importance unknown before, and the whole of the woodwork of the bed was hidden, as in the Louis XIII. bed shown here, by valances, curtains and large counterpane. The whole bed forms an architectural aspect with a tendency to develope in height. In the XVII. century the bed is often placed in a sort of alcove, especially in princely interiors. We have the *alcôve à la royale, à l'italienne, à la romaine.* This alcove is not a simple recess, but a second room adjoining the bedroom proper, and separated from it either by a series of columns or by a balustrade. When there is no balustrade the bed ought to be placed on an elevated platform. One illustration gives an idea of a *lit de parade* thus arranged. The alcove or bed-recess is found frequently in the middle-class houses of the XVII. century, it becomes common at the end of the XVIII. and in the present century it is very common both in Paris and the provinces. In certain provinces, especially in Flanders and also in Brittany, the beds are made in immense cupboards, the doors of which close during the day time, and form part of the wainscoting of the room so as to mask the bed completely.

In the bed, as in all furniture and all the objects of daily usage, we notice modifications introduced by the changes of manners and customs. We have seen the gradual emancipation of the bedroom, and its acquirement of an independent existence apart from the reception rooms; we have seen the importance of the *lit de parade* if social life. In the next reign, that of Louis XIV., the bedchamber partakes of the general majesty and dignity of that reign; the King's rising is a moment of audience; it becomes necessary that the bed, placed on a platform, should be accessible from all sides except the back. Hence the columns disappear, the dais or canopy is suspended, and diminished in size, the foot of the bed is lowered. In short the four-post bed passes through the various stages of the tent bed to the half tester bed, where varieties seem to be infinite. The transition is shown in beds *à la polonaise*, and *à la duchesse*, all of the very beginning of the XVIII. century. In the bed *à la polonaise* the canopy or top is called a *pavillon.* Henceforward we shall find this canopy taking the most diverse names, *daïs, baldaquin, impériale*, as it takes the most diverse forms. Sometimes the canopy takes the form of a crown; sometimes it is replaced by a big ring in the beak of an eagle or in the jaw of a lion's head; sometimes again the canopy is a cupola adorned with plumes and martial trophies. But of these oddities we shall perhaps have something more to say when we come to the beds of the first empire. As far as we have at present traced its development the bedstead has become alternately complicated and simplified. The simple couch is first of all surrounded by curtains hung on a string; then it is surmounted by a roof supported by columns; then the size of the roof is diminished; the draperies are made less voluminous, and placed only where they are strictly needed, either for protecting from draughts or for screening from the light, namely around the head; then all the four pillars are removed and the top of the bed suspended, or else the front pillars alone are abolished and the half tester bed with two back pillars is created. In short in the beginning of the XVIII. century the French bed had developed in principle all its varieties; henceforward its history will be the history of the artistic extravagance or perfection of the cabinet-makers of the reigns of Louis XV. and XVI., of the vagaries of the Empire and of the Restoration, and of the multifarious efforts of the modern makers. These matters together with the details of the mattresses, bedding and linen and other minutiæ, will form the subject of my next article. But while we are on the question of canopies I would observe that the canopy or tester without visible support, ought to be condemned both of logic and good taste as being a perpetual menace hung over the sleeper. It reminds me, at a peculiarly inopportune moment, of the story of that inn-keeper in the Black Forest, who at night used to lower a leaden canopy over his guests and when he had smothered them by gradual but sure pressure, quietly hoisted his ingenious machine and nobody was any the wiser.



SUGGESTIONS FOR CARVERS AND DECORATORS.

OF all the varied versions of the revival which occurred in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Flemish rendering is most akin to our own Elizabethan and Jacobean. The Museum Plantin-Moretus presents a unique picture of the dwelling and business establishment of a Flemish patrician. Christopher Plantin, the founder of the house, became celebrated as a printer towards the close of the sixteenth century, and the business was carried on uninterruptedly until 1800 by his successors. The dwelling-house portion is a most instructive lesson in Renaissance house-furnishing. Rich tapestry on the walls, fine oak carving and furniture, together with rare pictures, go to make up a residence of great interest. The chimney-piece is a capital type of an old Flemish fireplace, and the tapered chimney-breast and strap-work decorations are very characteristic of the style. The carving is laid upon a flat ground-work, tinted sage-green, which throws up the rich brown of the oak. A decorated cove above is modelled in plaster, and contains the mottoes of the Plantin and Moretus families. In the lower portion marble is used for the columns, otherwise the rest of the mantel is in oak. Some quaint old tiles ornament the back of the hearth, and they surround a curious cast-iron tablet, representing Adam and Eve at the foot of an apple-tree.—*The Cabinet-Maker and Art Furnisher* (London).